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A CONFIDANT TALKS ABOUT

The Real Jackie

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LONDON, FEB. 9 — One of Jacqueline Kennedy's close friends today gave a remarkable picture of her as:

¶ A woman convinced she had failed her husband "politically" in life but determined not to fail him in death.

¶ A woman who generally thought kindly of Lyndon Johnson until she began reading that Johnson had become a more effective President than John Kennedy; then she turned bitterly anti-Johnson.

¶ A figure who is being used to further the political ambitions of Sen. Robert Kennedy, and yet doomed to be discarded by her brother-in-law should he become President.

¶ A woman who delighted in the prerogatives of First Lady, yet at the same time a woman who sharply resented any invasion of her privacy while she held this public office.

British writer Robin Douglas-Home is no casual acquaintance of Jacqueline Kennedy. He has been an intimate, a confidant. He was often a White House visitor during the Kennedy Administration, and a man to whom Jackie turned for long talks which lasted late into the night.

The account he gives of Jackie in the interview is purely Douglas-Home's opinion and personal observation of her. He doesn't speak with the authority of an analyst or a political expert. But he does pass his opinions as a man who has been a close friend.

He may not be a friend of Jackie's today, however. He has written his candid impressions in the current issue of Queen magazine in London. Jackie reportedly has told friends that he never again will be welcome in her home.

"I realized as I wrote it that I would incur Mrs. Kennedy's disapproval, and once it was published it would be the end of our relationship," he told the New York Post in an exclusive interview.

"But I felt that I alone could throw some light on the mind of Jacqueline Kennedy and so explain her extraordinary actions over the Manchester book. So I knew I had to go ahead . . ."

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DOUGLAS-HOME FEELS THAT JACKIE "LOST her balance." He said in the interview, "There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that she became positively unbalanced, particularly when Johnson was getting Kennedy legislation through Congress and everyone was saying the same legislation would have been thrown back if JFK had remained alive."

"When I saw her immediately after the assassination, she was certainly not hostile to Lyndon Johnson, and when he was Vice President, I saw that she went out of her way to be charming and put both him and his wife at ease at White House functions.

"She paid far more attention and courtesy to the Johnsons than any of the other Kennedys."

Douglas-Home says that Mrs. Kennedy began to become preoccupied with her husband's image when President Johnson achieved an extremely high popularity rating in the public opinion polls, and thus overshadowed the man he succeeded.

"I am postive that she found this intolerable, and that's when her emotional balance went," he said. "This is not the sort of thing you say lightly, but I know from my talks with her that she had a very strong guilt complex, that she felt she had not supported her husband politically in life.

"She felt very strongly that she'd not given him

MRS. KENNEDY

DOUGLAS-HOME

the kind of political backing she should have done. In fact, in the last two years of his Presidency, she gave him great support and I told her so.

"But this self-induced guilt complex is firmly there and she believes quite incorrectly that she let him down in life.

"It became an absolute fixation that she would never fail him in his death. That is how the idea of the Manchester book began and finally ended in that unedifying quarrel."

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IN 1961, JACQUELINE KENNEDY MET DOUGLAS-Home. She liked him, and she decided she would confide in him. He became a kind of intellectual and emotional sounding board or, as he chose to put it, "I became her own personal emotional blotting paper, able to soak up and absorb the problems, the frustrations, the paradoxes of her life.

"I honestly don't know why Mrs. Kennedy chose me as her confidant. She did have a communication problem with her Washington friends, the Kennedy family and in some ways with her husband. It was obvious that she needed someone to talk to, but I still don't know why she chose me."

Perhaps it was understandable. After briefly flashing into the tabloid headlines in 1957 when he became engaged to Princess Margaret of Sweden, while earning his living as a nightclub pianist (parental objections on her side squashed the romance), Douglas-Home, nephew of Lord Home, settled down to anonymity in an advertising agency. One day in 1959, he met Frank Sinatra—not the easiest man in the world to strike a chord with—succeeded in interviewing him, and sold the article.

From that day, he has not looked back. It was swiftly clear that he could not only write, and write very well, but he had another great journalistic talent.

He was a born interviewer, knowingly instinctively when to remain silent to jog his subject's memory and when to phrase as concisely as possible the really important question.

He quickly became a big byline in British journalism, but he never interviewed Mrs. Kennedy.

"Naturally, I asked her several times," he said, "but she always laughed and said:

"'I'll never be interviewed by you. You know too much about me.'"

"There was great love and affection between Jack and Jackie," Douglas-Home told me. "The fascinating thing was you could see it grow during his Presidency. I'm certain that it wasn't until the second half of the Presidency that even Jack realized what a unique and special woman he had married."

But the relationship with the rest of the family wasn't that easy.

"The only one who really knew her worth from the beginning was Joe Kennedy," said Douglas-Home. "She got on reasonably well with Bobby, but there was little understanding between the other Kennedy women and Jackie. They underestimated her; particularly they never saw that there was a steel mind and an unbreakable will beneath that sweet surface. They know it now. But that still doesn't make them like her."

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THE PORTRAIT THAT DOUGLAS-HOME PAINTS of Mrs. Kennedy in the early days of her husband's Presidency is of a willful and unsure woman railing against fate but not really knowing why.

"It is something a little beneath her in scale," he said. "The best way I can put it is that she was a woman who wanted to have her cake and eat it."

She enjoyed the pinnacle that her husband's political success had brought them both to while she was still a young and beautiful woman, but she wanted it privately.

"This was totally illogical. But she would talk for hours about it, bitterly complaining that she was called on to give any part of her private life to the public."

A week before Dallas, they had a long talk at the Kennedy summer home in Virginia and it was apparent, said Douglas-Home, that she'd never been happier and had reached complete understanding that there was an acceptable public life in which she could be fulfilled.

"As I said in the article," he declared, "she had grown up. She was enjoying life, was a nicer person, and a great many of her problems had been solved."

But it was too late . . . she was within seven days of widowhood.

"So now you see why I decided to write this," said Douglas-Home. "It explains her whole behavior in the past two years. She could have retired from the scene. She could have created a whole new life for herself. Instead, she decided to devote herself to the legend because she felt guilty."

"Her mind is not on all the things she did for her husband, but is on the things she thinks she didn't do, particularly in the early days."

Douglas-Home says she found a willing accomplice in her "myth-building" activities in Bobby Kennedy.

As for Bobby Kennedy's motivation, "I don't believe that he would deliberately exploit Jackie," Douglas-Home said in the interview. "The facts happen to be she's his willing supporter. She feels she can help her dead husband by pushing Bobby into a position that he can set out to finish the things that Jack would have done.

"I've tried to explain that she's going into a self-made trap. Because it's obvious if Bobby gets to the White House, there would be no further use for Jackie. In any case, Ethel would see to that. She would have to. There can't be two First Ladies in Washington. And in any case, there isn't much love lost towards Jackie."

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I ASKED DOUGLAS-HOME WHETHER HE LIKED Bobby Kennedy.

"It's like asking me if I like my Uncle Alec," he said. "I like him very much. But if you ask me if I like my Uncle Alec as Prime Minister of Britain, that's another matter. I like Bobby, not as much as Jack, but I like him well enough.

"Whether I would like him as President is another thing. I suspect that I wouldn't. You may say that it's not my concern as I'm not an American. We all know that it's the U.S. President who really affects our lives."

Douglas-Home said he saw Bobby Kennedy very much as a "gun-dog." "Tell him to go into a thicket and sniff after pheasant and that's what he'll do. He'll keep on doing it until he's succeeded. If he gets elected President on that kind of reputation, that's fair enough. But I don't thing he should do it on an emotional tidal wave of JFK's mythology.

"I think that Jackie should remove herself from this bandwagon because she is not cut out for it."

Whether that is likely remains to be seen. Douglas-Home has been both criticized and praised here for his article. He could have sold it to any of the more sensational newspapers, but he chose to release it on a more sophisticated level in Queen Magazine. This he did deliberately. And the bulk of Fleet St. opinion is that it's a very finely done piece of writing. It is not unsympathetic to Mrs. Kennedy despite its revealing character.

Would she see it that way?

"I doubt it," he answered. "I suppose there can be only one of two reactions. She will either be very angry and upset and never speak to me again, or, if she is really cool and reads it objectively, she will recognize its truth and intent and act upon it by getting off the Bobby Kennedy campaign train.

"I can only hope it's the latter."